

# The Steller's Quill

BCGREA New Westminster & District Branch 800

"Fall 2016" Newsletter

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## **Christmas Luncheon 2016**

by **Bonnie Billington**

In response to rising costs for our traditional fully catered Annual Christmas Luncheon, the Hospitality Committee is planning a **buffet style Deli Luncheon** this year in our meeting place at the Centennial Community Centre River Room on **Tuesday December 6<sup>th</sup> at 12:00pm**. Please note this is a special event with no general meeting attached. We anticipate all **60 tickets** to sell out quickly as the response thus far has been very enthusiastic. Tickets are **\$15.00**. A reminder for those attending - we will be collecting non-perishable donations for the local food bank and to please bring a gift for the door prize draws.

Editor's note: **Please remember to bring your admission ticket as that ticket number is used for the door prize draw.**

## **Welcome New Members**

Welcome to the following new members who have joined Branch 800 since our last newsletter: **William Arthur (Art) Bridge, Lillian Isabella Buffett, Janet Isabella Farrell, Terrence (Terry) Farrell, Michael Edward Holmes, Dennis R Ishikawa, Irvine Daniel Jay, Kathleen Ling Oy (Kathy) Jay and Ron Odel Zapp.**

## **Branch Report from Chair by Myrna Cresswell**

Greetings to you all. Since our spring newsletter, the branch has continued with the planned workshops/speakers and social activities. Our April speaker was Nick Cheng of Edward Jones who spoke of income tax changes. In May we had a planned COSCO workshop on "Scams" that was well received by members. In June we once again enjoyed our summer social. The food was prepared by volunteer members and enjoyed by members attending the meeting.

Following the summer break, we heard from speaker, Chris Chan of Translink, about changes to transit that were happening in October and about the use of the Compass Card. We had more to hear from him and more questions for him. We plan to schedule him for another visit in 2017.

October 18 was our annual general meeting followed by the Autumn Dessert Fest organized by our Hospitality Committee. Words cannot describe them (volunteers and goodies)! Thanks to the Hospitality Committee and volunteer bakers.

The new executive starting January 2017 will be: Chair - **Myrna Cresswell**, 1<sup>st</sup> Vice Chair - **Wendell Ratcliffe**, 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice Chair - **Navin Goburdhun**, Secretary - **Pansy Wong**, Treasurer - **Alfred Malcolm**,

Membership Chairperson - **Rita Pollock**, Goodwill coordinator - **Jean Ing**, Phone convenor - **Sheila Halvorson**, and six Directors: **Bonnie Billington**, **Verna Cadwallader**, **Robert Langley**, **Andy McColl**, **Anna Tremere** and **Marleine Wagner**.

Members approved changes to the Branch Regulations which means that our annual general meeting (AGM) will now be held in June of each year with the officers moving to their positions on August 1 of each year. Our next AGM will be held June 20, 2017.

Members at the AGM also approved a motion on life membership. Effective immediately the branch will recognize life membership with the presentation of a certificate only at a regular meeting and failing that the certificate will be mailed to the member.

Our branch membership on September 30 was 795 members. Branch finances are sound but due to declining membership and revenues, a budget was approved in September without the previously suspended bursaries, and executive honorariums.

We will continue to publish two newsletters each year with thanks to the BCGEU who has continued to provide the printing and mailing expense for the newsletters.

We welcome all members to join us at our meetings. The meetings are held on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday of each month, except July, August and December at the River Room in the Centennial Community Centre, 65 E, 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue, New Westminster (adjacent to the Canada Games Pool at E.6th Avenue and Cumberland). The meetings start at 1:00pm sharp and end no later than 3:00pm.

Thank you and kudos go to all our volunteers; Branch Officers, Directors, Committee Chairs and members, food and beverage volunteers and our diligent phoners.

Our best wishes to you all for a joyous holiday and a happy and healthy 2017.

### **David Davies**

With the passing of **David Davies** the Branch has lost someone who epitomized the term “active member”. **David** served on, and chaired, the branch bursary committee for many, many years; and, more recently, chaired the branch’s finance committee; as well as “filling in” where needed and serving on the hospitality/refreshments committee on the branch summer socials for the past 20 years. He will be sorely missed. **David**’s government service was as a long service employee at Riverview Hospital from the early ‘60s to the late ‘90s. A Celebration of Life was held at Coquitlam’s Executive Inn on North Road on October 4, with many family friends, former colleagues and branch members in attendance.

### **COSCO Conference**

#### **Aging Well: A Quest for All Generations**

Branch 800 was represented at this conference by **Navin Goburdhun** and **Gail Harmer**. Their two perspectives of the Conference are as follows:

The COSCO Conference was well received by all the members of the audience..

The speakers selected to present the various topics were very knowledgeable and well versed in their delivery. The subjects and issues chosen were very pertinent and appropriate to the overall cause of seniors. The information obtained from the presenters was extremely beneficial.

Some of the topics covered were:

Towards Aging Well in BC

Affordable Housing for Seniors  
 Rural and Urban Transportation  
 Life after Driving  
 Pedestrian Safety  
 Inherent Tension between Population Aging and Health Care Systems Reform  
 Care and Support of Seniors  
 Income Necessary for a Senior to live a Dignified Life  
 Longevity and Global Active Aging - seniors make a difference  
 Technology for Aging Well  
 National Seniors' Health Strategy'

It was reported that more people are living longer and that longevity is higher in Richmond BC. Moreover, longevity and global active aging make a difference with seniors.

Queries were made as to the following: "Who are Seniors and what do they want?"

Seems to be an easy question to ask but difficult to answer.

'Seniors' is a mixed bag of Total Conformists and Non-Conformists - they are not all the same.

2016 - 850,000 seniors 65 and over. 17% of B C population.

2031 projected to increase to - 1.2 million " " " " 24% " " " .

Presumption: Seniors are rich! False.

Seniors are not poor either.

Some are.

Median incomes are lower than younger adults.

½ of seniors live on \$26,000 yearly

93% of seniors over 85 live independently

10% of seniors are in dependent living

At age 85 yrs Seniors will have another 7.2 yrs more to live

Seniors with Active Driving Licence

76% - 65 yrs +

34% - 85 yrs +.

Living Alone

26% -65 yrs +

46% -85 yrs +

Dementia - 80% of seniors aged 85 and up do not have dementia.

Suggestions are that some contributory factors for longevity are

Social participation

Life-long learning

Political participation

Culture

Gender

But the question arose as to "How old have you got to be to be termed "old"?"

According to the United Nation definition and declaration, for Canada you are old when you reach 60 yrs.

For South Africa it is 45 yrs and up to be considered "old".

As time goes by life expectancy is ever changing. Men reaching 65 will have another 19 years to live.

Women, on the other hand, once they reach 65 will have another 22 years to live to the ripe old age of 87 yrs.

Moreover, it is projected that 50% of all girls born in 2005 will live to 100 yrs.

And, as of now, Canada has that very special population of five (5) Super Centenarians - those 110 yrs +.

As the population is living longer health is a concern.

In order to deal with the various health issues 45% of the Federal Budget is assigned for health care.

\$,5000 spent on one Senior 65 yrs+/yr

\$7,500 spent on one Senior 85 yrs+/yr

In view of the increased cost of health care seniors are being advised to stay healthy.

Evaluate what Seniors have to offer and make positive use of them.

The notion that Seniors do not have anything to offer is false.

Seniors have expertise galore and in many fields. Application of their skills and knowledge are very beneficial to society at large:

Services - doing minor repairs

Reading to children in library

Continue to educate others e.g. migrants

Incredible stories to tell others

Have a lot to give back to society

Seniors provide informal support worth \$4 billion.

Healthy seniors will help in reducing the cost of health care. Therefore, steps have got to be taken to satisfy the World Health Organization (WHO) definition of health , which is “Health is complete physical mental and social well being, not merely the absence of disease or infirmity”

In order to abide by this definition, the following prerequisites were mentioned: Peace, Shelter, Food, Income and Ecosystem.

Action areas suggested to achieve these prerequisites are;

Building healthy public policies

Creating supportive environment

Strengthening community action

Development of personal skills

Reorienting human resources

It was emphasized that the health of Seniors depend on a number of factors, such as

Access to Health Care

Support with the activities of daily living

Appropriate housing

Adequate Transportation

Protection from abuse and neglect

A sufficient income to meet basic needs - food, shelter and medicines

It was reported that for some seniors the above needs were met. Yet there is concern for a number of Seniors for whom those needs are unmet. It was strongly suggested that Remedial Actions need to be taken in order to ensure that those unmet needs are taken care of.

Home Support - 97% of home support clients have an unpaid care-giver e.g. friends, family members or volunteer.

Residential Care - very important for Seniors life

- 15% of all clients are 85 yrs +

- Clients goal - to be active }

- to be engaged } for a better life.

Remedy:

1 Qualities of life have to improve: e.g. Shelter, Food, Nutrition and Therapies in case of illness.

2 Provide most Appropriate care and Environment: not structured and regimented; not prison-like residence; Community Housing.

3 Provide the Environment and the help required so that Seniors would want to stay and live their lives happily while aging.

4 Government and Cities have to take the responsibility to provide:

- a) Programs; b) Improve transportation facilities; c) Provide funding; d) To have increased awareness of seniors' abuse; and e) Government must have a *genuine* interest in improving the overall well being of Seniors.

Transportation.

Assigned speakers addressed transportation, the various modes of traveling and how they affect the mobility of Seniors.

They dealt with the urban and rural aspect of transportation and how the various significant organizations are dealing with and improving as well as facilitating safe mobility of seniors through BC Transit, Custom Transit, Paratransit and Dial-a-bus.

Affordable Housing and Homelessness

Causes:

Inability to pay -too costly; inability to find housing; unaffordable - too expensive; rental stock - low. Landlords do not want Seniors.

Low cost accommodation: Inappropriate, old, infested-bed bugs, no elevators.

Help:

SAFER

Rent Subsidy

Challenges of Senior renters

- 1) Subsidized Housing - Long waitlist
- 2) Lack of Appropriateness - Remote
- 3) Lack of Awareness - SAFER Subsidy
- 4) Affordability - No funds

Life after driving was another issue addressed:

As Seniors move up with age some deficits do show up in their overall functioning level; Slower reaction time; Poor reflexes; Poor reaction time; Cognitive decline

which affect their driving ability.

As a result DriveABLE Assessment; Cognitive Assessment; are done to ascertain the driver's ability to drive.

The goal of the Motor Vehicle Department is to provide safety for everyone including the Senior themselves.

In conclusion, COSCO's Conference was very successful and provided a lot of information as well as insight for the future of Seniors.

What I personally picked up is that Seniors should not feel the doom and gloom of getting older.

On the contrary they should take the bull by the horns and realize that we are a scarce commodity with lots and lots to offer.

Seniors have and are valued members of their society and community.

Seniors contributed \$4.5 billion to the country's economy through becoming informal care-givers.

The future is still very bright for seniors. **NG**

Thanks to my BCGREA Branch for supporting myself as one of two delegates they chose to report back to them on this very full two day COSCO Conference.

As it turned out, since I was a presenter at this same Conference (Pedestrian Safety), our Branch was not charged for my registration. However, my intention is to fulfill the original expectations of my fellow BCGREA branch members and report back my experience.

Two of the Conference's many featured speakers made the biggest impact on me.

Firstly, Isobel Mackenzie, our very hard working, astute and productive first BC Seniors' Advocate who in her half hour presentation covered many areas of top Conference concerns i.e. income, continuing and/or residential care, transportation, housing and pedestrian safety. She has done her work! I strongly recommend that our membership actively monitor all the materials coming out of her office by connecting to her website [www.seniorsadvocatebc.ca](http://www.seniorsadvocatebc.ca)

The second was BC's well respected, veteran bureaucrat and government advisor, Darryl Plecas. He highlighted what many of us need reminding about. It was the fact that politicians are limited in what they can do by the awareness and priorities of the population that elected them! In order to get political traction, we seniors have to work *to change the dominant perception voters have about the value of seniors!*

Other subjects covered included;

Housing: As some of you may know, my portfolio when I served on COSCO's Board was "housing". I must say that there was nothing new in the Conference that I haven't heard many times over! The CEO of BC Housing failed to show up due to a scheduling error, leaving the Senior Services Society's Brian Dodd with no one to debate! He was left with the "tired" recounting of his agency's sad state of affairs trying as a non profit to fill all the desperate need of seniors homeless or at risk of same in the Lower Mainland.

Income Panel: left us understanding what Isobel Mackenzie had already reported to us that overhalf of Canada's single seniors are living on incomes of less than \$26,000./yr. Our income based on our age cohort (over 65) has the lowest median income of all Canadians over the age of 25. The Canadian "piece work" of income support system leaves many of us having to make the choices of food or medicine or rent as the senior economist from CCPA (Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives), Iglia Ivanova, made graphically clear.

Transportation plans: Translink system still means scarce to no public transit in rural areas leaving seniors dependent on cars and driving. Handy Dart has become the focus of BC Seniors' Advocate's Office next survey of users due to the volume of complaints. City's are being petitioned by the BC Seniors' Advocate's Office to address the disproportionate % of deaths and injuries to seniors as pedestrians.

Residential Care: is already subject to BC Seniors' Advocate's Office survey due to the high number of complaints from residents and families and an effective lobby by Unionized staff servicing that industry. One of the themes that came out thanks to Marcie Cohen's excellent presentation was the fact that in this Province there is no consistent formula across the province for what constitutes "direct care". Also, we still have no acknowledgement of the human and

financial costs of not facilitating seniors living and dying at home and not in institutions. Finally, two full days in rooms with senior activists is the opportunity to reconnect with other activists. I reconnected with activists in the fields of elder abuse, new senior immigrants, seniors from Vancouver Island and the Interior. Unfortunately, again at this Conference I'm not aware of the presence of any representatives of Indigenous senior communities. **GH**

## In Memoriam

We regret to announce the passing of the following members since the last newsletter:

Patricia Stella Alford	Dorothy E Anderson	Yvonne G Cocke
David John Davies	Thomas (Tom) Davies	Mae L Doell
David C (Dave) Holmes	Dorothy Marsal Lee	Marie Maclean
Barbara H Nordli	Freda Helen Mary Paling	Delia Rogers
Charles Shaw	Geoffrey Woodbridge	

The Executive and Members of the BCGREA, New Westminster & District Branch 800  
express sincere condolences to these families and their friends

### Provincial Annual General Meeting

The Provincial AGM was held on October 18, 2016. Our branch was represented by **Myrna Cresswell**, Chair, and three delegates, **Wendell Ratcliffe**, **Rita Pollock** and **Alfred Malcolm**. The Provincial executive elected by acclamation were: **Ken Prendergast**, President, **Art Kaehn**, 1<sup>st</sup> Vice-President, and **Carrie Mulcahy**, 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice-President. Full details of AGM will be reported in the Provincial newsletter, "The Pen".

### Membership Dues

Membership dues are payable each year by January 2. Cheques should be made payable to BCGREA and mailed to the Membership Secretary for the branch:

**Rita Pollock**, 302-1110 Howie Ave, Coquitlam, BC, V3J 1V1.

**Those owing for 2016 or earlier years must pay by Jan.2, 2017 or be removed from membership. If this happens, to be reinstated you must reapply with a new application and current dues.** Please **consider** having your **dues deducted automatically** from your pension cheque each February. Not only will this relieve you of wondering if you have paid your dues each year but will provide the association with reliable funding. If you opt for automatic deduction, please provide the Membership Secretary with your social insurance number. **Thank you**, (Your SIN is held in strictest confidence and is used by the Pension Corporation and the Association to avoid confusion between members with similar names or first initials).

On October 9, 1953 I was hired at Riverview Hospital (formerly Essondale) as a kitchen helper. I was soon dispatched to Woodlands School to cover employees during their vacations. I embarked on an apprenticeship for a cook and was later transferred to the butcher shop that was located next to the Stores department. I was encouraged to apply to the Stores department, so I abandoned the apprenticeship for a cook, and was successful in obtaining a Stockman 2 position. I later obtained a Stockman 4 and was in charge of the Stores department at Burnaby Mental Health Centre, a position I held until my retirement in 1988.



During my early years at Essondale, I met Joe Hancock, the head gardener who worked at Essondale from 1947 to 1980 and who had graduated from London's Kew Gardens as an arborist and a horticulturist. His predecessor was Jack Renton, also trained at Kew Gardens, and was responsible for planting many of the 1,800 unique and varied trees at both Essondale and Woodlands School between 1917 and 1947.

On October 18, 2011, I was privileged to be present at the demolition of the Centre Block building of Woodlands School, when one of the former residents had the honour to give the signal for a bulldozer to complete the dismantling of the structure which represented such tragic memories.



I am glad the grounds did not lose their charm, that the now mature trees have remained healthy and that the landscape remained beautiful throughout the dormant years.



**Ron Sadler**